



September 1, 2006

Senator Tom Coburn  
Chairman, Subcommittee on Federal Financial Management,  
Government Information and International Security  
439 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Via Facsimile: 202-228-3796

Dear Senator Coburn:

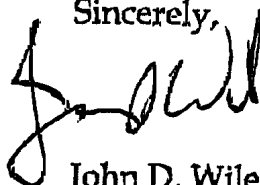
I am writing in response to your letter of August 4, 2006, requesting information about appropriations received by the University of Wisconsin-Madison since 2000. UW-Madison is one of the nation's largest research universities, ranking among the top ten recipients of federal research funding for many years. Nearly all of that funding is awarded competitively, through peer-reviewed grant programs of the National Institutes of Health, National Science Foundation, Department of Energy, Department of Defense, and other agencies. In 2005, UW-Madison researchers won 2,593 federal research grants, from over 25 different federal agencies, worth over \$635 million.

As an institution, we have a long record of opposing the use of earmarks or other non-peer-reviewed methods for the awarding of federal research funds, a position which we state in an annual briefing book that we share with Wisconsin's congressional delegation. Competition is the best way to ensure that federal funding is used for the highest-quality research that provides the best benefit to the nation, and to society. Internally, we actively discourage researchers from seeking earmarks from Congress, and I make a point of underscoring our belief in peer-review with both our researchers, and our delegation, whenever we can.

For some programs federal funding is only available through congressional designation and we have occasionally received awards of this type, primarily through the Department of Agriculture. However, such earmarks represent a miniscule proportion of our federal research awards (for 2004, earmarks represented well under **two tenths of one percent** of our federal research portfolio), and are subject to the rigorous internal evaluation that is done for all research conducted at the University. We believe that the fact that we receive very few earmarks indicates that our position of opposing them is well known and accepted by our faculty. While we have an individual in my office who serves as our liaison and advocate to Wisconsin's congressional delegation, we have never actively considered the hiring of a lobbying firm to represent UW-Madison in seeking federal funds for research.

I hope this letter is of help to you.

Sincerely,



John D. Wiley  
Chancellor

Attachment

CC: Wisconsin Congressional Delegation

## **Earmarked vs. Competitive Funding**

The University of Wisconsin-Madison is a strong supporter of awarding federal research funds on a competitive, peer-reviewed basis. We believe this is in the national interest and will continue to focus our efforts to promote selection through a competitive process. We urge federal policy-makers to make decisions about appropriate spending levels and research priorities that reflect long-term national goals that are based on scientific merit and value.

## **The Importance of the Competitive Peer-review Process**

Peer-review is the backbone of science, as it practiced today. The peer-review process ensures that federally funded research has merit by requiring grant applications to undergo a critical, academic review by scientific experts (the grant applicant's "peers") who rank the proposals based on their scientific and technical quality. This creates a market system of competition and performance to determine the best research proposals to fund, and ensures that federal research funding is spent on sound, ethical, research that best advances science as a whole.